

and Services Administration. HRSA, a division of the Department of Health and Human Services, has as its goal to improve access to primary and preventive care services to uninsured and underinsured individuals.

It focuses on maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS care, recruiting doctors in underserved areas, health care in rural areas, and organ donation. HRSA strives to develop "best practices" and create uniform standards of care, including eliminating health disparities among minority populations.

Some of the additional services for women that will be covered under the Mikulski amendment include mammograms for women under 50. In 2000, breast cancer was the most common cancer affecting Maryland women, and nearly 800 women died from the disease, according to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 76.6 percent of women aged 40 and over had a mammography within the past 2 years. This amendment would ensure that all of these women would have access to mammography with no out-of-pocket cost.

Also covered under the Mikulski amendment are cervical cancer screenings for all women, regardless of whether they are sexually active, and ovarian cancer screenings—all those will be made available under the Mikulski amendment. Ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer deaths among women in Maryland. General yearly well-women visits would be covered; pelvic examinations, family planning services, pregnancy, and postpartum depression screenings, chlamydia screenings for all women over 25. Chlamydia is the most prevalent sexually transmitted disease diagnosed in the United States. Approximately 4 million new cases of this disease occur each year, and up to 40 percent of the women infected with this disease may be unaware of its existence. It is the leading cause of preventable infertility and ectopic pregnancy.

Also included are HIV screenings for all women regardless of exposure to risk. According to the Kaiser Foundation, among those women who are HIV positive, 33 percent of the women were tested for HIV late in their illness and were diagnosed with AIDS within 1 year of testing positive.

We need to do a better job here. This is International Aids Awareness Day. I think it is very appropriate we have the Mikulski amendment on the floor today.

Studies reported by the Kaiser Foundation indicate that women with HIV experience limited access to care and experience disparities in access, relative to men. Women are the fastest growing group of AIDS patients, accounting for 34 percent of all new AIDS cases in 2001, compared with 10 percent in 1985. So this amendment will help in regard to that issue for our women.

Also included is sexually transmitted infection counseling for all women.

Women disproportionately bear the long-term consequences of STDs. Screenings for domestic violence are covered. The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence reports that one out of every four American women—one out of every four American women—reports she has been physically abused by a husband or a boyfriend at some time in her life. Well, the Mikulski amendment provides screenings for domestic violence.

Also included are overweight screenings for teens, gestational diabetes screenings, thyroid screenings.

Much of the debate on health care reform has focused on quality—how do we make our health care system work better and produce better outcomes for the money we spend. Ensuring that women have access to preventive services that are recommended by experts on women's health is absolutely essential to providing quality care.

This amendment protects the rights of a woman to consult with a doctor to determine which services are best for her and guarantees access to these services at no additional cost. Preventive health care initiatives is one area I hoped we could all agree upon. The Senate has a long history of bipartisan support for women's preventive services. I hope the string remains unbroken with this amendment.

I strongly support the efforts spearheaded by Senator MIKULSKI to extend the services that are covered for women. I strongly urge my colleagues to support this very important amendment that makes a good bill better. This bill is desperately needed. Let's vote for those amendments that improve it, such as the Mikulski amendment, and let's move forward with this debate.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise in support of the Mikulski amendment and to discuss the importance of preventive health care for women.

All women should have access to the same affordable preventive health care services as women who serve in Congress.

The Mikulski amendment will ensure that is the case.

It will require plans to cover, at no cost, basic preventive services and screenings for women.

This may include mammograms, pap smears, family planning, and screenings to detect heart disease, diabetes, or postpartum depression—in other words, basic services that are a part of every woman's health care needs at some point in life.

We often like to think of the United States as a world leader in health care, with the best and most efficient system. The facts do not bear this out.

The United States spends more per capita on health care than other industrialized nations but has worse results.

According to the Commonwealth Fund, the United States ranks 15th in "avoidable mortality." This measures how many people in each country sur-

vive a potentially fatal, yet treatable medical condition. And the United States lags behind France, Japan, Spain, Sweden, Italy, Australia, Canada, and several other nations.

According to the World Health Organization, the United States ranks 24th in the world in healthy life expectancy. This measures how many years a person can expect to live at full health. The United States again trails Japan, Australia, France, Sweden and many other countries.

These statistics show we are not spending our resources wisely. We are not finding and treating people with conditions that can be controlled.

Part of the answer, without question, is expanding coverage. Too many Americans cannot afford basic health care because they lack basic health insurance.

The Mikulski amendment, and providing affordable access to preventive care, is another part of the answer.

Women need preventive care, screenings, and tests so that potentially serious or fatal illnesses can be found early and treated effectively.

We all know individuals who have benefited from this type of care.

A mammogram identifies breast cancer, before it has spread.

A pap smear finds precancerous cells that can be removed before they progress to cancer and cause serious health problems.

Cholesterol testing or a blood pressure reading suggest that a person might have cardiovascular disease, which can be controlled with medication or lifestyle changes.

This is how health care should work: a problem found early and addressed early. The Mikulski amendment will give more women access to this type of care.

Statistics about life expectancy and avoidable mortality can make it easy to forget that we are talking about real patients and real people who die too young because they lack access to health care.

Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health shared the following story, which comes from Dr. William Leininger in California.

He states:

In my last year of residency, I cared for a mother of two who had been treated for cervical cancer when she was 23. At that time, she was covered by her husband's insurance, but it was an abusive relationship, and she lost her health insurance when they divorced.

For the next five years, she had no health insurance and never received follow-up care (which would have revealed that her cancer had returned). She eventually remarried and regained health insurance, but by the time she came back to see me, her cancer had spread.

She had two children from her previous marriage—her driving motivation during her last rounds of palliative care was to survive long enough to ensure that her abusive ex-husband wouldn't gain custody of her kids after her death. She succeeded. She was 28 when she died.

Cases like these explain why the United States trails behind much of